



Food Control

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Food Facility Program

The Food Control Program is one of five programs within the Environmental Health Section. Other Environmental Health programs include Food Control, Ecology and Institutional Services, Animal Control, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program and Rat-Rub Out. The Food Control Program enforces state and local food safety regulations in over 5,000 Baltimore City food facilities.

The goal of the food program is to ensure that food sold and served is safe, properly labeled and produced under sanitary conditions. The Baltimore City Health Department's mission is to protect and improve the health of all



Baltimore citizens.

Food facilities inspected include:

- Restaurants
- Markets
- Bakeries
- School cafeterias
- Mobile food preparation vehicles
- Caterers

Food Facility Permits

All food facilities, including restaurants, bars, bakeries, cafeterias and all types of mobile food vehicles, as listed above, are required to have a



permit. In addition, any change in ownership or alteration of a food facility (e.g. install new or additional equipment, make structural changes or change the type of operation) must

be approved by the Health Department in advance. For more details, please call 410-396-4424.

Note: Unless suspended or revoked, a permit expires on the 1st anniversary of its effective date.

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ACCORDING TO THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC), FIVE FOOD SAFETY RISKS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS CONTRIBUTING TO FOODBORNE ILLNESS.

- *Improper holding temperatures*
- *Poor personal hygiene*
- *Inadequate cooking*
- *Contaminated equipment*
- *Food from unsafe source*

Preventing Foodborne Illness

Practicing good personal hygiene is one of the best ways to keep disease-causing agents from contaminating food. Good personal hygiene includes proper handwashing to protect yourself and others. Hands should be washed thoroughly with soap and warm water and dried with disposable paper towels or air-dried.

Temperature control is another way of preventing foodborne illness. Temperature control is accomplished by taking into consideration the following:

1. The **Danger Zone** is the temperature range at which food bacteria grow and multiply rapidly in potentially hazardous foods (meat, fish, poultry, dairy products, eggs, cooked vegetables and grains). This occurs between the temperatures of 41° F and 140° F. To avoid the danger zone, potentially hazardous foods should be kept: **Cold** – at or below 41° F, or **Hot** – at or above 140° F.

2. Cooling Techniques

Heated food should be cooled rapidly using one of the following methods:

- Separating the food into smaller or thinner portions
- Placing the food into shallow containers
- Inserting the container of food to be cooled into an ice water bath and stirring frequently.

A Quick Reminder: Food may be loosely covered or uncovered to allow the food to cool faster - provided the food is protected from contamination.

3. Cooking Temperatures:



Inadequate cooking temperature is the leading cause of foodborne illness. Maryland law requires minimum cooking temperatures for the foods listed below:

Food Product

Minimum Cooking Temperature

- Ground, chopped or formed meats
165° F for 15 seconds
- Eggs and food with eggs
155° F for 15 seconds
- Pork and pork products
155° F for 15 seconds
- Poultry, stuffed fish, meat or poultry
165° F for 15 seconds

4. Reheating

Potentially hazardous foods that were previously heated must be reheated rapidly to a minimum internal temperature of at least 165° F. Food should not be reheated more than once.

5. Proper Thawing

Defrost frozen food properly using one of the following methods:

- In a refrigerator at 41° F or lower
- In a microwave oven
- Under cold running water
- As part of the cooking process

NOTE: Potentially hazardous foods must **NOT** be thawed at room temperature!

“Inadequate cooking temperature is the leading cause of foodborne illness.”

Foodborne Illness Investigations

Foodborne illnesses are diseases that are carried or transmitted to human beings by food. Bacteria cause the greatest number of foodborne illnesses. Some of the most frequently reported food poisonings result from Salmonella, Staphylococcus and Clostridium bacteria. All of these bacteria are capable of causing illness and discomfort in the infected individual. Some of the major symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, dehydration, fever and chills. In rare instances, foodborne illnesses can even result in death. Individuals at highest risk include the very young, the elderly and people in poor health or with specific medical conditions, such as diabetes or impaired immunity. The Food Program, Public Health Laboratory and Epidemiology Programs are responsible for investigating all reports of suspected foodborne illness within Baltimore City. When a report is received, an Environmental Health Sanitarian conducts an inspection of the food facility referenced, focusing on the following areas: food sources, food processing techniques, food handling, storage practices and employee practices.

Any outbreak of foodborne illness is a serious matter! Please contact the Epidemiology program to report any cases of suspected foodborne illness in Baltimore City. The program's number is 410-396-4438.

Preventing Cross-contamination

Cross contamination is the transfer of harmful organisms from one food item to another and may occur by:

- Hands that are in contact with raw foods and then put in contact with cooked or ready-to-eat foods without first being washed.
- Using the same utensils and equipment for cutting and preparing potentially hazardous and “ready to eat” food without properly washing and sanitizing between uses.
- Raw food juices coming into direct contact with cooked or ready-to-eat foods.



People are primarily responsible for cross-contamination. Avoid poor hygiene and dangerous food handling techniques and always keep equipment properly cleaned, sanitized and maintained.

Hand washing: Employees shall thoroughly wash their hands and arms by vigorously rubbing them with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Employees are required to wash their hands before beginning work, before handling food/equipment/utensils, as often as necessary when switching from working with raw to ready to eat foods, after touching body parts, after using the toilet room, or any time when contamination may occur.

Inspection Report

The Food Facility Inspection Report will detail conditions at the facility and list violations concerning:

- Food Handling Practices
- Food temperatures
- Sanitation
- Cleanliness
- Infestation
- Plumbing
- Food source
- Utensil Washing
- Building Conditions

Every facility that has violations noted will receive an abatement date for corrective action and a re-inspection. Critical violations and presence of an infestation will cause the facility to be closed.

“People are primarily responsible for cross-contamination.”

Mobile Food Vehicle

Mobile Food Preparation Units (Hot Trucks) and Mobile Food Facilities (Ice Cream Trucks, Produce Trucks, and Carts) are inspected and issued permits by the Baltimore City Health Department. To schedule a vehicle inspection appointment, please call 410-396-4544.

Plan Review Section

This program reviews building and installation plans and specifications for all new and remodeled food facilities within Baltimore City. The purpose of reviewing one’s plans is to ensure that all food facilities are constructed in accordance with the Maryland COMAR 10.15.03 Retail Food Service Facilities Law (Health & Safety Code) and other applicable requirements. Contact Plan Review Section 410-396-4544 before construction begins.



Enforcement Actions

Notice of Correction

If violations are noted during a facility inspection a Notice of Correction with Abatement date is issued.

Closure:

If a facility has violations of critical items, e.g. an infestation or a large number of violations, the facility will be closed, until:

- Corrections are completed
- An office conference with owner/operator is conducted
- A re-inspection fee is paid
- A re-inspection is completed and the facility is approved



Contact Information and How to File a Complaint

All complaints regarding food facilities, foodborne illness or any health or ecology issue **MUST** be reported to the Baltimore City Complaint System, telephone number 311. Complaints referred to the Health Department are investigated within a 7 to 20 day period.

Address:

Baltimore City Health Department
Division of Environmental Health
210 Guilford Avenue, 2nd Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21202



To receive a guide, "How to start a food business", call **410-396-4424**.

Health Promotion & Disease Prevention and to report cases of suspected foodborne illness call: **410-396-4438**

Plan Review:

To schedule an appointment for inspection or permit call:
410-396-4544

Visit us online @

Website: www.baltimorecity.gov/health

Permits:

Food: 410-396-3787

Food Manager's Certification: 410-396-4424

Swimming Pool: 410-396-4428

Waste Haulers: 410-396-4428



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BALTIMORE CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

